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CM Afridi questions 'pressure on courts' amid case delays

- Seeks to meet Imran, IHC CJ but turned away
- Doubts govt itself has seen 27th Amendment draft
- PTI stages sit-in outside high court over case delays

By Malik Asad and Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi on Thursday sought meetings with the chief justice of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) and with PTI's party's patron-in-chief Imran Khan but failed.

Speaking to journalists outside the IHC, he said he had wished to ask the chief justice who was "pressurising the courts".

He complained that PTI cases were not being scheduled for hearings and said the party had a constitutional right to peaceful protest. "It is unfortunate that I am not allowed to meet Imran Khan despite the IHC orders," he said.

The chief minister then travelled to Adiala Jail for the fifth time but was again denied a meeting.

"Every time I am told I cannot meet him," he said, alleging that "some individuals have become stronger than institutions".

Mr Afridi also expressed doubt that even the government representatives themselves have seen the draft of the 27th Amendment, which is expected to be tabled within days.

He also urged critics to apologise for allegations made against him and said those who opposed his nomination were now seeking to justify their stance.

Criticising military operations, Mr Afridi alleged that civilians have suffered disproportionate harm. "Do you know how painful a military operation is? I have picked dead bodies of my family," he claimed and made allegations about the conduct of security personnel. "Even after that, we say the army and the country are ours," he added.

He said he would oppose any policy adopted without the confidence of the KP government and its people. He stressed that people were brought from Afghanistan to the province even though KP residents did not support the settlement.

Protest outside IHC

Separately, PTI ticketholders and lawmakers staged a protest outside the IHC on Thursday against alleged delays in fixing cases related to Imran Khan.

PTI Punjab Chief Organiser Aliya Hamza Malik said the "peaceful sit-in" would resume on Friday, adding that all PTI MNAs and MPAs from Punjab had been directed to gather at 1pm outside the court on the instructions of the former prime minister.

Throughout the morning, PTI legislators arrived at the court premises, chanted slogans and spoke to the media outside the main gate.

During Mr Afridi's visit to the court, an incident occurred in which Sub-Inspector Nasir of Islamabad Police allegedly misbehaved with journalists and Senator Falak Naz Chitrali.

Witnesses said the officer first stopped media personnel from proceeding beyond the main gate and later prevented the senator from entering the Secretary to the Chief Justice's office, where the chief minister had gone after completing biometric procedures.

According to reports, the officer told the senator she could not go inside. "How can you stop me? I am a senator," she reportedly responded. The officer replied: "I am a duty officer."

Senator Falak Naz expressed anger at the treatment and hinted at raising the matter in a Senate committee.

The KP chief minister remained seated in the Secretary to the Chief Justice's office for some time but was unable to secure a date for the hearing of Imran Khan's cases. He later left the premises after completing his biometric verification.

Strict security measures were in place in and around the high court. Police deployed additional personnel and placed barriers at entry points. Media representatives, particularly TV cameramen, were stopped outside the court's gate and barred from entering due to what officials described as "security protocols".

Pakistan and Turkiye's security 'inseparable': minister

- Joint working group to be set up to strengthen cooperation between interior ministries
- PM reaffirms commitment to deepen bilateral ties

By Iftikhar A. Khan

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister of Turkiye Ali Yerlikaya has said that Pakistan's security was not separate from that of his country.

The statement highlighting the deep-rooted relationship between the two countries were made during his meeting with his Pakistani counterpart here on Thursday. The remarks came amid high-stakes peace talks in Istanbul, where Pakistan warned that failure could lead to open conflict.

Backed by Turkiye and Qatar, Pakistan is pushing for a verifiable mechanism to curb cross-border terrorism from Afghanistan.

The two ministers held a one-to-one meeting, followed by delegation-level talks. During discussions, both sides held detailed consultations on counterterrorism, counter-narcotics, human trafficking, border security, cybercrime, coast guard operations, and police cooperation.

The two sides agreed to establish a joint working group to further strengthen cooperation between interior ministries of both countries.

The working group will meet four times a year and the ministers of the two countries decided to enhance collaboration in counterterrorism.

Turkish Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya praised Pakistan's active role in counterterrorism and counter-narcotics efforts.

The meeting also resulted in an agreement to enhance further cooperation in eliminating illegal immigration and human rafficking.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi emphasised that "human trafficking and illegal immigration are global issues that require joint efforts for elimination".

Pakistan announced its full support for T rkiye in the upcoming Interpol elections.

TURKISH Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya shakes hands with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.—APP

Both sides also agreed to strengthen collaboration in counter-narcotics sector.

Mr Naqvi noted that "despite limited resources, Pakistan's Anti-Narcotics Force is doing commendable work as not a single case of drug smuggling from Pakistan to T rkiye has been reported in the last five years".

The two ministers agreed to increase police training cooperation and benefit from each other's experiences in various professional domains.

The Turkish interior minister said that T rkiye attaches great importance to its brotherly relations with Pakistan and it is keen to expand cooperation in all fields, adding that the establishment of the joint working group will help further strengthen bilateral collaboration.

The Turkish minister thanked his Pakistani counterpart for the warm hospitality extended during the visit.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to deepen bilateral cooperation with Turkiye in the fields of security, counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, police training, disaster management, trade, and economic development.

He expressed this commitment, while talking to Turkish Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya, who called on him here.

The prime minister praised T rkiye's strong and unwavering support for Pakistan's stance on key issues. He particularly thanked the Turkish leadership for its role in facilitating the ongoing peace talks between Pakistan and Afghanistan in Istanbul.

Highlighting strong fraternal ties between Pakistan and T rkiye, PM Shehbaz conveyed his warm regards and greetings to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The Turkish interior minister thanked the prime minister for the warm hospitality extended to him and his delegation.

He conveyed greetings for the prime minister from President Erdogan and expressed T rkiye's strong desire for enhanced collaboration in law enforcement, intelligence-sharing and disaster management.

Kashmiris observe Jammu Martyrs' Day

ISLAMABAD: The people of Jammu and Kashmir, living on both sides of the Line of Control (LoC) and across the world, observed the Jammu Martyrs' Anniversary on Thursday to commemorate the supreme sacrifices of over 250,000 Muslim residents of Jammu city and its outskirts who lost their lives in 1947 while migrating to the newly-born Muslim homeland, Pakistan.

The day is observed every year by Kashmiris to remember the martyrdom of more than 250,000 men, women, children, and elderly Muslims of Jammu who were mercilessly slaughtered by armed Hindu gangs, Indian occupying forces, and Dogra military troops — with the connivance of Dogra Hindu fanatics — under a nefarious, pre-planned conspiracy while they were proceeding to migrate to Pakistan near the Jammu-Sialkot working boundary.

This year too, the day was observed, renewing their pledge to continue the ongoing struggle for the freedom of occupied Jammu and Kashmir from Indian control until the achievement of their globally recognised right to self-determination.

Kashmiris vowed to continue their freedom struggle with renewed resolve until victory.

In Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), special ceremonies, including seminars and symposiums, were held in various parts of the region, including the capital Muzaffarabad, to pay tribute to the Jammu martyrs who were gunned down by armed Hindu fanatics and Dogra military personnel 78 years ago, in 1947.

President, PM's messages

In his message, President Asif Ali Zardari reiterated Pakistan's unwavering support for the people of occupied Kashmir in their struggle for self-determination.

PM Shehbaz, in his message, said that India was committing a "prolonged violation of fundamental human rights, the right to self-determination, and international law".—Agencies

PIA sacks president, secretary general of engineers' body

- SAEP officials dismissed for unauthorised press conference, information leaks
- Airline cites Essential Services Act violations

By Mohammad Asghar

RAWALPINDI: Society of Aircraft Engineers of Pakistan (SAEP) President Abdullah Jadoon and Secretary General Awais Jadoon were dismissed from service on Thursday amid an ongoing tiff with the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA).

PIA spokesperson Abdullah Hafiz confirmed the development to *Dawn*. The national flag carrier also issued two dismissal notices to the engineers, copies of which are available with *Dawn*.

According to the notices, Mr Abdullah and Mr Awais served as aircraft engineers at grades PG-VI and PG-VIII, respectively.

The dismissal letters stated that the SAEP president was served notices for holding a press conference without prior authorisation and for sharing official information with the media, while the SAEP secretary general was accused of unauthorised disclosure of confidential operational details and PIA images.

"In order to enquire into the allegations/charges communicated to you via the aforesaid showcause notice, an enquiry was conducted wherein you failed to participate despite providing ample opportunities to appear and defend your case," the notices read.

"After examining the available evidence and statements of prosecution witnesses, the enquiry committee found you guilty of the charges levelled against you," they added.

They further read that both the SAEP officials were provided two opportunities to appear before the chief executive officer, but they had failed to do so.

"Keeping in view your entire disciplinary case, the management has decided to dismiss you from the service of Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Limited," the notices said, adding that these dismissals would go into effect immediately.

The dismissals come amid an ongoing tiff between the PIA management and the SAEP, with the protesting engineers refusing to issue clearance certificates to aircraft — a move that has disrupted flight operations in recent days.

The engineers have been protesting for two-and-a-half months, seeking pay hikes among other demands, according to SAEP officials.

Legal offence

Earlier, the PIA spokesperson noted that the Essential Services Act was in effect at the airline, under which strikes or abandonment of work constituted a legal offence. He warned that all those involved in, or supporting, such actions as part of a conspiracy would face legal consequences.

For his part, Mr Awais had previously said the two officers were on duty and working, but could not compromise on safety and airworthiness.

"We are being forced to issue clearance certificates [to release the planes], but we cannot put passengers' lives at risk in such tense circumstances." He had also clarified that the engineers were not on strike and said that they were only issuing clearance certificates to aircraft completely fit for flying.

In response to a question about a meeting with the PIA management, he had said they had not been invited for negotiations or to discuss the engineers' concerns, but rather for a 'personal inquiry' initiated against them.

Meanwhile, the PIA has alleged that the engineers' protest is an attempt to sabotage the national flag carrier's privatisation process.

Flight disruptions

The matter came into the spotlight when hundreds of air travellers were reported to have been stranded at three major airports on Monday night due to the aircraft engineers' protest, which delayed at least six flights of the national flag carrier.

Similar delays have been reported at nearly all major airports in the country during the last two months.

On Tuesday, the PIA claimed to have restored flight operations through alternative arrangements. A PIA spokesperson said that the management had used alternative means and worked overnight to restore operations, mitigating the impact of already delayed flights on subsequent operations.

The PIA said on Wednesday as well that it had managed to "partially restore its flight operations".